

CONTRIBUTIONS TO A GRAMMAR OF THE MUSKOCHEE LANGUAGE.

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1. Historical notes on the language, its dialects, affinities, and literature.
2. The Alphabet.
3. Remarks on Buckner's "Maskoke Grammar."
4. The Muskochee verb.
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I. HISTORICAL NOTES.

The Muskochees, (*este muskokee*, or *muskokv'ke*), or, as they were called by the English settlers, the Creeks, when first known to Europeans, occupied most of the territory now embraced in the states of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. They were divided into a number of towns, each governed by a civil ruler, the *mekko* or king, and a war-chief, and all subject to one potentate, in whose family the supreme power was hereditary in the female line.

Their geographical position brought them early into contact with the white race, and many Muskochee names are preserved in the ancient Spanish narratives. Most of these, when given the Spanish pronunciation, are still intelligible to the natives, and some of the town names are those of towns (*i. e.*, bands), still in existence. The narratives of De Soto's expedition (1539-40) contain many such, and the town of Tocobaga, mentioned by Hernando d' Escalante Fontanedo,¹ who was wrecked on the coast of Florida in 1552, is still found among the Creeks in the Indian territory. The latter writer lived several years among the natives, and gives a word or two of their language. One of these, *se-le-tega*, which he translates "run to the look-out," I repeated, with the Spanish pronunciation, to Mr. S. W. Perryman, Speaker of the House of Warriors of the Creek Nation, an educated and intelligent native, without informing him of its alleged meaning. He at once translated it "run thither," the look-out being probably intimated by a gesture. Other Muskochee words given by Fontanedo are : Otapali, properly *oti palin*, ten islands ; and Tampa, properly *timpe*, near to it.

In the year 1570, Juan de la Vandra, a Spanish officer at the post of St. Helena, north of the Savannah river, sent a detachment inland to seek the town of Coosa, mentioned in such extravagant terms by the survivors of De Soto's expedition. The report of this exploration has been published by Mr. Buckingham Smith in his "Coleccion de Documentos sobre la Florida." It contains the names of a number of native villages. These I read to Mr. Perryman, who promptly identified several of them, as Ahoya, two-going ; Ara-uchi, a place where a tree named ara grows ; Gwatato, properly *coahrtari*, dry cane ; Issa, deer ; Satapo, properly *satape*, persimmon tree ; Solameco, properly *solv mekko*, buzzard king ; Tasqui-

¹ Memoir of Hernando d' Escalante Fontanedo. Translated by Buckingham Smith, Washington, 1854.

qui, a town still in existence ; Coosa, the Cherokée name of the Creek nation.

The missionary labors of the Spanish Jesuit and Dominican ecclesiastics were in all probability partially among the Creeks, especially those of Father Juan Rogel.² We know that vocabularies and grammars were prepared by these devoted men, all remnants of which, so far as they relate to the Muskokee tongue, are lost.

I must not overlook one extremely valuable linguistic memorial brought to light by Mr. Buckingham Smith. It is a letter written in the Apalache dialect of Florida in the year 1688, and republished by Mr. Smith in facsimile. The word Apalache, in Choctaw *Apvlvchi* (*v=ä* short), means to help, helping, or helpers, and *Apalachic'ola*, *apvlvchokla*, is allies, literally, helping people. An examination of the letter shows that it is in a dialect closely akin to the modern Hitchitee, which is one of the branches of the Muskokee.

The Muskokee has several dialects, the most important of which are the Main Creek, or Muskokee proper, and the Hitchitee. These two differ so much that a native accustomed only to the one cannot understand the other. The words are largely the same, and when they differ, usually correspond in the number of their syllables. It is in accent, terminations, permutation of consonants, and change in quantity of the vowels, that most of the variations seem to consist. Between these two, the Alabama and Coösady dialects intervene, both partaking more closely of Hitchitee than of Main Creek. The Seminole language of Florida is not distinct from the Main Creek, as has so often been stated ; not more, Mr. Perryman informs me, than the English of New England differs from that spoken in the southern states. There are, however, Seminoles who speak Hitchitee, and others Mikasuke, a dialect akin to Hitchitee.³

The latter, in what it differs from Main Creek, approaches the Chikasaw, which is a dialect of Choctaw.⁴ The difference between Hitchitee and Choctaw is not greater than between Hitchitee and Muskokee. This whole group of tongues, which has been denominated the ЧИАНТА-MUSKOKEE group, does not show greater diversity among its members, than the Romanic group of Aryan tongues. This affinity is often of advantage in studying their grammatical structure, as I shall have occasion to point out, relying for the Choctaw on the unpublished "*Grammar of the Choctaw Language*," of the late Rev. Cyrus Byington, which extremely valuable work has been in my hands.

The Muskokee was probably reduced to writing the first of any of the

² "The people among whom Roger [Rogel] and Villareal now [1566] began their mission, were evidently a branch of the Creeks."—Shea, *Hist. of the Cath. Missions among the Ind. Tribes of the U. S.*, p. 57. The later labors of Father Rogel, on the "Rio Dulce," were not among the Cherokees, as Shea supposes, (p. 59,) but still with the Creeks, as appears evident on examining Rogel's original letters, contained in the rare work of Alcazar, *Chrono-historia de la Comp. de Jesus en la Provincia de Toledo*. I published a translation of these letters in *The Historical Magazine*, Nov., 1861, p. 327.

³ For specimens of Mikasuke and Hitchitee, see *The Historical Magazine*, Aug. 1866, p. 239. The latter is also called Chelokee. The geographical names Okee-chobee, Okee finokee, etc., are Hitchitee, and not Main Creek.

⁴ The Choctaws and Chikasaws can readily understand each other.

aboriginal tongues north of Mexico. In 1562, René Laudonnière, coasting among the sea-islands between the mouths of the Savannah and St. John rivers, collected a vocabulary, which unfortunately he did not think of sufficient interest to insert in his narrative.⁵ Father Rogel applied himself with success both to the words and structure of the tongue,⁶ but his manuscripts are not known to be in existence. Consequently, the earliest specimens of Muskokee proper, except the few words given by Fontanedo, date after the settlement of the colony of Georgia by the English. The Moravian missionaries who settled at Ebenezer, near Savannah, attempted to study the language in order to use it in converting the natives. Their success was poor, though they collected a number of words. In writing them they used the Greek alphabet, as better adapted to express the native sounds. Hence we find in their reports such strangely familiar-looking words, as τυτζα fire, properly tvtke, άσσε sun properly hasse, σιλλ_απίχα shoe, etc.⁷ The use of the accents in their vocabularies is one advantage over the modern alphabet. I believe, however, no translation was ever published in this character, and the missionaries soon became discouraged in their proselytizing efforts.

The first printed books in Muskokee, which I have been able to find, were published in 1835. One of them is a translation of the Gospel of John, by the Rev. John Davis; the other a duodecimo tract of 35 pages, entitled:

A short sermon: also hymns, in the Muskokee or Creek language, by Rev. John Fleming, missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston, 1835).

Since that date a number of religious and educational works have appeared, the titles of some of which in my possession I add:

Nakcokv Setempohetv. Introduction to the shorter Catechism, translated into the Creek language by Rev. R. M. Loughridge, A. M., and Rev. David Winslett. Second edition, revised and improved. Presbyterian Board of Publication, Phila., 1858, 12 mo., pp. 34.

Nakcokv es Kerretv Enhvteceskv. Muskokee or Creek First Reader, by W. A. Robertson, A. M., and David Winslett. Second edition. New York, 1867, 12 mo., p. 48.

Nakcokv esyvhi ketv. Muskokee Hymns, collected and revised by Rev. R. M. Loughridge, A. M., and Rev. David Winslett, interpreter. Fourth edition, revised and enlarged by Rev. W. S. Robertson, New York, 1868, 12 mo., pp., 221.

Cesuv oh nyares. I will go to Jesus. Translated into Creek by Thos. Perryman and Mrs. A. E. W. Robertson, Tullahassee Mission, American Tract Society, no date: 12 mo., pp., 23.

A Grammar of the Maskókee or Creek Language, to which are prefixed lessons in spelling, reading, and defining. By H. F. Buckner, a mission-

⁵ He says: "mettant par escrit les termes et locutions indiennes, jé pouvois entendre la plus grande part de leur discours." *Hist. Notable de la Floride*, p. 29.

⁶ He says: "In six months I was able to speak and preach in it." *Letter of 9th Dec.*, 1570. These early students, to take them at their word, must have had more linguistic talent than our generation is favored with.

⁷ Urisperger, *Nachrichten*, Anno 1734.

ary under the patronage of the Domestic and Indian mission board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Assisted by his interpreter, G. Herrod, superintendent of public instruction, mecco Creek nation, etc. Published by the Domestic and Indian mission board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Marion, Alabama, 1860, 8 vo. pp. 139.

Messrs. Buckner and Herrod also published a translation of the Gospel of John, and Mrs. Robertson, a translation of a tract on the Sabbath. The Laws of the Nation and various other works have likewise appeared. The Nation, I may here state, numbers about 14,000 souls, and about one-half of the male population can read, so it is of considerable importance that the structure of the language be ascertained.

II. THE ALPHABET.

The need of a uniform alphabet for American tongues is nowhere more vividly shown than in Muskokee. More than one-half of the limited literature I have above mentioned is unintelligible to educated natives on account of the discordant alphabets used. Not less than *five* different ones have been devised. That now generally adopted and certainly best adapted for practical utility to the Nation, is based upon the English sounds of the letters. It was agreed to by many interpreters and chiefs at the Old Agency, in 1853, and has been introduced in all printed works since, except those of Messrs. Buckner and Herrod. It contains thirteen consonants, and six vowels. The vowel sound of a in *fate*, the sound th, and the consonants b, c, d, g, j, r, q, v, x, and z, are wanting, although in the Hitchitee dialects the b occurs. The remaining consonants are given their English values, and the letters r and c are introduced to represent sounds not in our tongue. The r is an aspirated l, slightly guttural, quite similar to the Welsh ll. The c is pronounced tcb, soft, as in *wretch*. The w is always surd, as in *we*, *weak*. The vowels are :

a the Italian or Spanish a.

e as in *me*.

i as in *pine*.

o as in *note*.

u as in *wood*, or *rule*.

v represents the neutral vowel, and is really ä short. No accents are used, although both accents and signs of quantity should be employed to express the language correctly. No nasals are provided for, although very soft nasals do occur, and are represented in Mr. Fleming's alphabet by diacritical marks, and in that of Mr. Buckner by the Spanish ñ following the vowel.

The absence of sonant letters and of decided nasals is the chief difference between this and the Choctaw alphabet, and explains much of the apparent diversity between the two tongues. Thus the Choctaw sinti, snake, becomes in Muskokee ceto, the sonant being changed to its surd, and the nasal dropped; Ch. shakba, arm, shortens the first vowel to v, and permutes the labial, becoming Mus. svkpa; and again Ch. iubi becomes Mus. hufi, thigh.

Mr. Fleming gives two sounds to a, one as in father, the other as in wash; e as a in paper; i as ee in meet; ai as i in pine; and represents the r by hl. Of course this materially alters his orthography.

Mr. Buckner makes use of the Agency alphabet, with these changes: ch for c; i as in pin; ii as i in pine; u as in rule; o as in not; the Greek ω for o as in go; θ as oo in took, foot. These changes, he claims, are necessary to represent the language accurately, but both the natives and the missionaries have told me this is a mistake. There is really no such sound in Muskokee as o in not, and Buckner's error arose from the shortening effect of k after the sound of a, as in rakko, great. Furthermore, the distinction he draws between θ and u is imaginary, as he himself half confesses in a note to p. 22 of his Grammar. As his work is the only attempt ever made to display the grammatical structure of the language, it will be a service to philology to point out several serious errors into which he has been betrayed. I am enabled to do this from information furnished me by Mrs. A. E. W. Robertson, of the Tallahassee mission, who is excellent authority on the language, and from the unpublished manuscripts of the late Rev. Cyrus Byington, from which I have drawn that which relates to the Choctaw.

III. REMARKS ON BUCKNER'S "MASKÓKEE GRAMMAR."

Nouns. The author (p. 52) remarks that common nouns are not varied on account of number; and that names of people are pluralized by the suffix vki. The rule should be that most nouns denoting an agent form their plural by adding lke, as pasv a sweeper, plural pasvlke; some others indicate the plural by adding take, which also forms the plural of pronouns, and in writing it is important to distinguish which word is pluralized, as the position of the suffix is in both cases the same; thus, ce wvuv take, your (pl.) sister, but ce wvuvtake, your sisters.

The declension of the noun is given by Buckner under three headings, the first form, the nominative case, and the objective case. The first form always ends in a vowel, the nom. case in t, the objective in n. The possessive case, he says, is formed by prefixing the possessive pronoun to the thing possessed. Mrs. Robertson divides the cases into nominative, possessive, objective, relative, and vocative. The nominative ends in t, but with "continual exceptions," not for euphonic but for grammatical reasons still obscure. The possessive case is the simple form of the noun, but requires the possessive pronoun after it, as it did in old English, *e. g.* "John his hat." The declensions given are as follows:

| | BUCKNER. | MRS. ROBERTSON. |
|------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1st form | Cane John | |
| Nom. | Canet | Canet |
| Object, | Canen | Canen |
| Possessive | | Cane |
| Relative | | Canen |
| Vocative | | Cane. |
| | Cane em eslafkv, John his knife. | |

I think that any attempt to give paradigms of Muskokee nouns in this

manner will be incorrect. Those "continual exceptions" will still remain obscure. We are so inveterately accustomed to the declensions of the Aryan tongues, and to case-endings, that we think every language must have them. Such is not the case. None of the Chahta-Muskokee tongues have anything of the kind. They express the relations of words in a sentence by a complicated but strictly regular system of particles or elementary sounds, each sound, when combined, retaining its original significance, which are called "post-positive particles" or "article-pronouns." These are divided into two classes, the definite and the distinctive, and are subject to numerous changes. They can be used with all parts of speech, and supply the place of case-endings, and modal terminations. The Muskokee terminal series *t*, *it*, *et*, *vt*, corresponds to the Choctaw *at*, *vt*, *et*; the objective and relative forms are the Choctaw nasals *a* and *o*; and the possessive form is the same in both tongues; *e. g.* Choc. Chan in *chuka*, John his house. There is still wanting an analysis of the Muskokee article-pronoun, and no grammar of the language can be drawn up correctly till this is done.

Adjectives. On the comparison of adjectives Mr. Buckner says (p. 68): "The comparative degree is formed by prefixing *sin* to the positive, and the superlative is formed by prefixing *ri* to the comparative, as *cvmpe*, sweet; *sincvmpe*, sweeter; *risincvmpe*, sweetest." In fact, both these latter are in the comparative degree; *sin* is the particle *es*, governing a pronoun in the relative, and the expression should read *es en cvmpe*, sweeter than it; the *r* or *er* prefixed to the *es*, simply expresses a stronger comparison, as *er es en cvmpe*, still better than it. The superlative is formed not by a prefix, but by the suffix *mahat*, in the nominative, and *mahan* in the oblique cases, as *cvmpe mahat*, sweetest.

Mr. Buckner's rule for the plural of adjectives is: "Adjectives of two syllables form their plural by inserting the contracted form of the first syllable between the two syllables of the singular," as *tvphe*, wide, pl. *tvp-tvhe*. This rule is very incomplete. There are in Musokee two classes of adjectives, the first closing the root with a single consonant, the second with a double consonant, or with two consonants. The first form their plural by adding *vke* to the root, as here, good, pl. *hervke*, cate, red, pl. *catvke*, lane, pl. *lanvke*. The second class form their plural by inserting the first two letters of the root between the two closing consonants, as *hvlve*, pl. *hollhvwe*, *lvvke*, pl. *lvwlvke*, *svfke*, pl. *svfsvke*, lowvke, pl. *lowv-loke*. Many of this class transpose the consonants, apparently for the sake of euphony; as *kocukne*, pl. *kocumcoke*, *cvfekne*, pl. *cvfencvke*. Some of them also form their plural as those of the first-class; as *yekce*, pl. *yekevke*, *afvke*, pl. *afvekvke*. Some in both classes insert *ho* before the terminal consonant; as *hiye*, pl. *hihoye*, *holvke*, pl. *holvvhoke*; *cvpvkke*, pl. *cvpvkhoke*. *Lekwe*, rotten, has two plurals, one, *lekhove*, applied to animal matter, the other, *leklewe*, to vegetable matter.

There is also a dual of adjectives, which Buckner does not mention. It is not frequently used; *cvfekne*, pl. *cvfencvke*, dual *cvfencvkvke*; *yekce*, strong, pl. *yekevke*, dual, *yekevkvke*. These occur only in the second person.

Throughout Mr. Buckner's work his division of words is faulty, and adds much to the difficulty of the language. He is much too positive in his views, and his translations are frequently far from literal. His Grammar cannot be relied upon as a safe guide in any sense, and while he is deserving of much credit for his industry in collecting material, the arrangement of and the deductions from that material must be condemned.

IV. THE MUSKOCHEE VERB.

The conjugation of a verb in an American language is a prodigious task. In analysing the Muskokee verb I shall avoid as many complications as possible, and speak only of active verbs, in their first transitions (when the object is presumed to be always in the third person and the singular number), in their first form, and affirmative signification.

Roots. Muskokee verbs have two roots. The first is formed by dropping the termination *etv* of the infinitive mood, as *nvfketv*, to strike, root *nvfk*, *kicetv*, to tell, root *kic*. The second root is formed by inserting *h* before the final consonant of the first root, if there is but one consonant; and by inserting *i* between the two final consonants if they are two; and if they are the same, the latter is changed into *y*; *e. g.*

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>kicetv</i> | 1st root <i>kic</i> | 2nd root <i>kih</i> |
| <i>letketv</i> | <i>letk</i> | <i>·letik</i> |
| <i>vkhotetv</i> | <i>vkhot</i> | <i>vkhotiy</i> |
| <i>merretv</i> | <i>merr</i> | <i>meriy</i> |

Moods. The ordinary form of the Infinitive ends in *etv*. The sign of the subjunctive is the particle *omat*, added after the tense sign. It corresponds to, and is probably derived from, the Choctaw subjunctive particle *kmvt*. The Imperative has a future as well as a present form, corresponding in this with most other American languages, and not a rare exception as Buckner thinks.

Tenses. The imperfect tense has not less than five forms. The first refers to something which has transpired to-day, the second to what transpired yesterday, the third to an occurrence usually only a few weeks ago, or, as we would say, "lately," the fourth to an action or event long since completed, but within the memory of the speaker, while the fifth imperfect, called the indefinite or historic tense, refers to transactions of which the subject of the verb has no personal knowledge, nor is directly connected with.

The future tenses are the simple, the compound, and the progressive futures. The progressive futures are formed by adding to the first and second roots the termination *vran*, and subjoining the tense signs of either past, present, or future tenses. They express the idea of being about to, or having been about to, perform an action, and when formed from the fifth imperfect, convey the sense of obligation or necessity. It will thus be seen that both in formation and signification they present a striking analogy to the first and second periphrastic conjugations—those from the participles in *rus* and *dus*—in Latin.

All the above tenses are formed from the first root of the verb. The perfect tense, is formed as in Latin, from the second root, by adding to it the terminations of the present.

The tense-signs are as follows :

Present, es, the e dropped in the first person singular, and lengthened in the first person plural.

Imperfect, first, is

second, vnks

third, emvtes, emvtvs, or emvts, the e dropped in the first person singular.

fourth, vntvs

fifth, vtes

Future, simple, vres, the v dropped in first sing.

compound, tares, used after the fifth imperfect with its final s dropped, *e. g.* nvfkvyvte tares.

progressive, vran added to the root.

Perfect, is, to second root, the i shortened to v when it comes before y.

Persons. The persons are indicated by inseparable personal pronouns between the root and the tense sign. They vary in the different tenses according to the following table: Sing. 1st pers. 2nd, Pl. 1st 2nd 3d

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|------|---|------|----|
| Present, and third imp., | i | etsk | e | atsk | ak |
|--------------------------|---|------|---|------|----|

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|------|----|------|----|
| First, second, fourth, and fifth imp. | vy | etsk | ey | atsk | ak |
|---------------------------------------|----|------|----|------|----|

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|------|----|------|----|
| Simple future, | a | etsk | ey | atsk | vk |
|----------------|---|------|----|------|----|

The third singular is wanting.

There is a dual form of the verb when two persons or things are *spoken of*,—an objective dual, in a sense. It is formed by prefixing *torkor* (probably a corruption of the Choctaw *tuklo*, two) and making changes in the first syllable of the root, according to rules with which I am not acquainted. The pronouns remain in the singular form, as *letkis* I run, *torkorkis* we two run.

Negative form. The negative form of the verb is made by inserting the negative particle *ak* (Choctaw, *ik*), after the root, which latter may undergo euphonic changes, *e. g.* *kicis*, I say, *kicakis*, I do not say.

It was my intention to give a complete paradigm of the active, affirmative, simple verb, in the first transition, but as I am not able to exhibit this satisfactorily at present, I shall omit it. I shall therefore conclude this article by a partial analysis of a specimen sentence in the language, and a comparison of it with the same in Choctaw, thus showing the affinities of these tongues.

V. SPECIMEN SENTENCE.

Acts. ch. xiv, verse 11:

And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia: The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

In Muskokee:

Momen estet, nake Pal momecaten hecakof em opuuvkv-en-haken kvvvpv kvtes, Likeonv em punvkv ofvü, Hesakv tvmese este omvket ye pun hvtpvces, mahaket.

Translation.

Momen, and, the conjunctive particle with the terminal *n*, which throws the clause into the oblique case or sense.

estet, the people, compounded of *este* and the definite article-pronoun nominative *t*, literally, people the.

nake, the thing, or things.

Pal momecaten, that Paul had done.

hecakof, when they saw.

em, their.

opunvkv, word; en, its; haken, sound.

kwvpakvtes, they lifted up, fifth imperfect.

Likeonv em punvkv ofvu, Lyeaonia its language in.

Hesaketvmese, gods, from *hesaketv*, life, and *emese*, source or font, "source of life." This is the word commonly employed by the missionaries for God. Col. Hawkins, in his Sketch of the Creek Country, spells it *E-sau-ge-tuh E-mis-see*. Mr. Perryman tells me that it is probably a word coined by the English, and not of native origin.

este omvket, men resembling.

ye, hither, pum, to us; hvtppees, have descended; makaket, saying.

In Choctaw (the nasals in italics):

Mihma okla hash ot, Pal vt nana yvmihinchi na pisa mvt, Laikeonia anumpa ho okla anumpulit chitoli hosh, Chitokaka vhleha yvt hatak o chiyuhmit aka mintit ayvt hvpim vlvshke; ahanchi tok.

Translation.

Mihma, and, with the definite oblique termination.

okla, people, hash ot, pronoun of renewed mention definite, the aforesaid ones, they.

Pal vt, Paul he; nana, the responsive pronoun definite; the thing which, what.

yvmihinchi, he had done.

na—mvt, when, pisa, they saw.

Laikeonia anumpa ho, Lyeaonian speech the, ho is the distinctive article pronoun in the oblique case.

okla anumpulit hosh, the people, the aforesaid ones (hosh) spoke; chitoli, loudly.

Chitokaka, gods, vhlehay vt, they indeed, article pronoun definite.

hatak o to men, distinctive and oblique, chiyuhmit, resembling.

aka, below, mintit, coming toward, ayvt, here, "coming toward this place below."

hupim, to us; vlvshke, have come, from ula, to come.

ahanchi tok, they said. The particle tok throws the verbs into the remote imperfect tense.

The strong similarity in the construction of the two languages is very evident from these specimens.